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ABSTRACT

Described are the planning, organization, provision, availability, and different organizational solutions of special education in Finland. The philosophy of special education is reported to closely follow Finnish school reform which emphasizes meeting the individual child's needs. Discussed are the availability of special education and special teachers, and the future plan to include special education content in the training of regular teachers. It is noted that the number of special schools is decreasing and that present emphasis is on increasing and improving clinic-type special education, remedial instruction, pupil welfare services given in connection with normal schools, and prevention of difficulties. Reviewed are educational programs (municipal and state) for cerebral palsied children and children with aural and visual handicaps. Included are two charts: one on the number of teachers and pupils in special education in 1973-74, and the other showing special education organization in the Finnish school system. (SB)

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No 2, 1975

THE POSITION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Editors:
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FOREWORD

The starting-point of the objectives of the comprehensive school is that the primary task of the school is to provide stimuli for the development of each pupil's unique personality. Individual differences due to different learning readiness can to a fairly larged extent be coped with by pedagogical measures within the class and in some cases by means of remedial teaching. The general principle is to keep pupils in normal classes as long as possible. Only when learning difficulties are permanent and grave may organizational solutions be needed to supplement instructional individualizations within the regular class.

This report describes the planning, organization, provision, amount and different organizational solutions of special education in Finnish public education and the teaching of exceptional groups. Mr Niskanen is the Head of the Board of the Special Education Bureau of the National Board of Education and Mr Sikiö Chief Inspector in the same Bureau.

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PREFACE

Special education has been provided to children in compulsory school age as follows:

1. In connection with the municipal school system (auxiliary schools, other special schools and classes and individual special education)
2. The education of the aurally and visually handicapped
3. Special education provided by the social welfare system (ESN-schools, reform schools, multihandicapped)

The following principles have been applied in arranging special education.

- In each case the regular class placement is to be preferred and such supporting, treatment and rehabilitation measures should be taken which make it possible.
- If the regular class placement is not possible, the pupil must without delay be given an opportunity to study in a special class, school or boarding school.
- Home education should be arranged to as the last resort.
- Educational legislations should be developed so that the municipalities have an absolute obligation to provide each child with suitable basic education.

The arrangements for special education are illustrated in Appendix 1.

The present and future development of special education are closely connected with the on-going school reform. The educational reform started in the northern and eastern parts of the country in the school year 1972-73. It means that the old parallel school system is replaced by a 9-year comprehensive school. The comprehensive school covers the age groups 7-16. It will have been introduced in the whole country by 1979-80. This report deals mainly with special education in the comprehensive school. The development and implementation of special education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, the National Board of Education, the County Departments of Education and the local educational authorities.

Helsinki February 27 1975

Elias Niskanen
Bureau Chief

Unto Sikiö
Chief Inspector

National Board of Education

THE PLANNING AND PROVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND

Elias Niskanen

The planning and organization of special education is closely connected with Finland's school reform, which has been implemented since the beginning of the school year 1972-73. The goals and objectives of this school reform are included in the Act on the Principles of Public Education, which was unanimously passed by the Parliament in 1967.

Besides the before mentioned Act the Parliament also carried a motion on the development of special education. The motion was as follows: The Parliament presupposes that with the school reform special schools and classes should take care of the teaching of children, who because of physical or mental illness or handicap cannot follow teaching in a normal class. On the basis of the Act passed by the Parliament as well as the motion special education in Finland can be developed in conformity to the development of our school system as a whole. Generally it can be stated in this connection that the school reform and the special education reform take place simultaneously and along the same lines in principle. That is why the development of special education in Finland can follow the main principles of our school reform. According to these principles our school system (and special education) should be developed so that a socially fair, economically and socially equal school is created, which is effective instructionally and pedagogically so advanced that the individual differences in pupils can be taken into consideration in teaching situations. These general principles of the school reform can also be made the over all goals of special education.

The main aim in developing the rules and regulations of the comprehensive school has been to make special education as closely an integrated part of the comprehensive school instruction as possible. That is why regulations on mere special education have been included in acts and statutes only when it has been necessary. This has been done to ascertain the effective integration of special education. These attempts have generally been advantageous to the over all development of special education.

However, certain defects have also been found, but these defects have been amended as people on the various levels of administration have learned to interprete the special education regulations more flexibly.

At the end of 1967 the Ministry of Education set up a planning committee on the comprehensive school special education. This committee left its first report in 1970 and its second report in 1971. The reports include detailed proposals for the organizational principles and goals to be followed in the development of special education. Only certain main goals of the committee's proposals can be mentioned here.

The committee points out the following as regards the development of special education:

With the school reform the concept of special education should be extended and refined. New groups of children should be brought into special education and new, more effective functional forms should be created. On the other hand special education should be developed so that the rehabilitation of exceptional children could be taken better care of than has been the case in earlier years. The child should be the prime concern when planning and carrying out these principles. For instance exemption from compulsory education should be totally abandoned. In stead each child should be provided with education and rehabilitation corresponding to his individual development level on the basis of research results and expert opinion.

The committee feels that special education for exceptional children could best be arranged as an integral part of the school system as follows:

- Each child should primarily be put to a normal school where he should be given supportive instruction, rehabilitation etc. through which he can manage in a normal school or class.
- In case the previously stated arrangement does not prove sufficient, the pupil should without delay be given a chance to study in a special class, special school or boarding school.
- Home education should be a last resort in case of severely handicapped children.
- Educational legislation should be developed so that the municipality is responsible for arranging suitable basic

education to each child.

The above main goal implies that the future special education in Finland aims at increasing the duties and part of municipalities in special education as well as securing all children a right for education suitable for their needs. Possibilities for integration should also be studied further than has been the case so far.

The committee has also presented some facts on increasing the mental health services of schools and considers it highly vital to provide schools with school psychologists and school welfare workers. These implementations have an important preventive function as regards special education.

Planning in the field of special education has also been carried out by the Committee for Special Education in the Field of Social Welfare and the Committee for Vocational Special Education. The first mentioned committee has made proposals for special education provided by social welfare workers (ESN instruction and reform school education). Social welfare workers and school authorities have their representatives in the committee. The committee stated that the concept of compulsory education should be extended so that it covers the entire age group. The organization should follow the principle of normalization as far as possible. Teaching must be arranged within a unified system so that pupils' individual needs for education are satisfied irrespective of what other kind of rehabilitation he needs besides his studies. Thus for instance the mildly retarded should be provided instruction within the compulsory school system in special classes. More seriously retarded pupils should be placed in rehabilitation schools. The planning and finance of rehabilitation schools should be taken care of by social authorities, the planning, coordination and implementation of instruction should be carried but by school administrators.

The Committee for Vocational Special Education has made proposals for the over all organization of education, through which the instruction of those having received special education or the like could be arranged. These proposals will not be dealt with here.

In general committees and commissions have in their proposals emphasized the various possible forms of special education. There does not exist only one kind of special education, one system or one kind of activity. The special education of exceptional children requires a great number of different forms of activity and lots of methods, whose planning and carrying out should sufficiently take into consideration the circumstances where the activities are performed.

THE AMOUNT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN FINLAND IN THE SCHOOL YEAR 1973-74

Unto Sikiö

The Special Education Bureau of the National Board of Education has made a survey on the special education situation in Finland in all Finnish municipalities on the basis of a questionnaire mailed in the spring of 1974. The survey revels the number of special education and the amount of special teachers by type of position.

At the moment approximately 40 per cent of our compulsory education - aged children are in the comprehensive school. At the same time the comprehensive school reform takes place, the special education.

The medium range plan of the National Board of Education presupposes that the number of special education teachers should be doubled in the forthcoming five years. Thus the relative proportion of special education in normal education would be about one half of what it is in Sweden now.

The amount of special education in Finland can best be seen in the following statistics:

The number of pupils and teachers by the type of special education in the school year 1973-74

All Finland		Pupils		Teacher positions						Positions not filled		New position	
				gualified		unqualified		total					
			Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe		Swe
Class special education	313/465[1]												
Spec. sch.	313/465	6455	194	519	15	200	11	719	26	4	1	80	8
Obs. class	66/465	2116	26	169	2	97	1	266	3			41	
Neurally handic.	16/465	304	7	31	1	10		41	1			6	1
Aurally handic.	14/465	208	6	28	1	4		32	1			8	1
Visually handic.	1/465	14		2				2					
Other	27/465	27	27		2				2				
Total		9124	260	749	21	311	12	1060	33	4	1	135	10
Special ed. inside regular classes	235/465												
Speech diff.	89/465	24456	565	100		50	2	150	2	27	1	50	
Reading diff.	158/465	21645	827	145	3	82	6	227	9	33	3	58	2
Speech. reading, writing diff.	106/465	6234	364	41	4	81	8	122	12	31	3	40	3
Other		236	100			2	1	2	1	1		3	
Total		52571	1856	286	7	215	17	501	24	92	7	151	5
Part-time teaching													
Speech diff.		934	170										
Reading diff.		5364	294	258	18	248	7	506	25				
Speech, reading, writing diff.		182	11										
Math. diff.		703	38	24	6	19		43	6				
Other		21											
Total		7204	513	282	24	267	7	549	31				

Class special education 9124 pupils, of whom 260 Swedish speaking

Special ed. inside regular classes 59775 " , of whom 2369 Swedish speaking

Total 68899 " , of whom 2629 Swedish speaking

Spec. sch. = special school
Obs. class = observation class
Handic. = handicapped
Diff. = pupils' difficulties in each respective area

1) Special education municipalities/ the total number of municipalities
Swe. The number of those speaking Swedish in the total number

On the basis of these statistics it can be seen that 13 per cent of Finland's municipal compulsory school pupils receive some kind of special education.

Class special education (i.e. special school classes, observation classes, classes for the neurally handicapped or aurally/visually handicapped) was given to 1.7 per cent of all compulsory school pupils in the spring term of 1974. Finland has already a number of special schools, which number can be considered appropriate. According to the survey approximately 90 per cent of our population is in the reach of special school services. Regardless of this 152 municipalities in our country do not have special schools. These municipalities have small populations, which makes it impossible to found an active, competent special school. The Act on the Principles of Public Education is under change at the moment. The change provides a chance to arrange part-time special education corresponding to special schools.

Special education outside regular class instruction (speaking, reading and writing) is given to 11.3 per cent of all compulsory school pupils. The plan of the National Board of Education supposes that services within special education should primarily be given in the pupil's own school and that the pupil's domicile should not affect his possibility to get these services. That is why pupils should at least be given special education outside regular classes in sparsely populated areas.

These points of view should be taken into consideration when increasing the number of special education teachers. At the moment there are about 1000 class special education teachers and 500 teachers for special education outside regular instruction, but the number should be 1500 teachers around the year 1980.

It seems presently that special teachers who give instruction outside regular classes, the so - called clinic teachers, will have to move from one school to another daily and give instruction in several places. For instance in the northernmost county of Finland some teachers must travel as much as 600 kilometres weekly and in the country as a whole almost 235 kilometres weekly.

One of the great obstacles in Finnish special education development at the moment is the shortage of teachers. According to a survey

about 1/3 of all teacher positions and almost one half of special teacher positions (outside classes) are taken care of by incompetent teachers. Additionally about a hundred special teacher positions were vacant. Special arrangements are being made to increase special teacher training, among others exceptional teacher training. The shortage of special teachers has to some extent been helped by increasing the training of class teachers specilized in special education. These teachers can beside their actual work take care of pupils with minor learning difficulties and do this in their own schools.

The 1973 Teacher Training Committee has quite recently set up an expert work party to reorganize special education in Finland.

According to plans future teaching will include more special services, which means that regular class teacher training should include special educational teaching contents. This is necessary because cooperation between class teaching, remedial instruction and special education could best be carried out.

SPECIAL SCHOOL, SPECIAL CLASS AND CLINIC AS ALTERNATIVES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION

Unto Sikiö

According to the Act on the Principles of Public Education the Finnish comprehensive school may include special schools and classes for children in compulsory school age. In addition, special education may be given in other ways deemed relevant.

The 1921 Act on Compulsory Education and the corresponding statute did not contain detailed regulations about municipal special education and the statute on special schools was enacted only in 1952. Before that, exceptional children as a rule received instruction in the regular classes or they were exempted from attending schools.

The 1957 Act on Public Education and the statute enacted the following year, both of which are still in force, have specific provisions for special education. The regulations emphasize education given in auxiliary schools. Development in this field of special education has been rapid in this country.

Simultaneously with the creation of the auxiliary school network there was a tendency in larger communities to arrange separate schools for other exceptional groups as well, and a certain type of segregation thinking was prevalent at that time. At the moment, this kind of schools, e.g. observation schools for maladjusted, are few in number and increasingly this type of special education is given in special classes.

We are introducing a comprehensive school system at the moment. The Act on the Principles of Public Education was passed in 1968 and the comprehensive school statute was given two years later. The development of special education is closely connected with the ongoing school reform. The emphasis in the development of special education in the comprehensive school is at the moment on increasing and improving clinic-type special education, remedial instruction and pupil welfare services given in connection with a normal school and on the prevention of difficulties..

The realization of these measures presupposes close collaboration between normal education and special education. Special education services can be distributed more evenly among different regions and special education can be organized more effectively in connection with the pupils' "own" school also in sparsely populated areas. This also means that the transportation of pupils to the municipal school centre can be reduced.

According to the comprehensive school statute, special education in clinics can be given to pupils with speech, reading and writing difficulties and to pupils suffering from other special disorders. If the planned changes in the rules and regulations are enforced, this type of special education might also be provided to mentally retarded, mildly retarded and maladjusted pupils so that auxiliary schools and observation classes might be supplemented or replaced by corresponding clinics, or special education might be given by ambulatory special teachers.

Clinic-type special education takes place either individually or in small groups in a separate clinic room or as simultaneous instruction in the normal classroom space by a special teacher, who has no regular class of his own to teach.

Many special teacher positions have been created after the enactment of the comprehensive school statute. The ratio between special education given in specific classes and "classless" special education is still strongly in favour of the former in terms of the number of teacher positions (2:1).

The comprehensive school statute also makes it possible to integrate special education and normal education in certain subjects. Special class pupils may be combined with corresponding comprehensive school classes in the elective and voluntary subjects at the upper level of the comprehensive school (grades 7-9) and in handicraft, physical education and music, whenever it is judged feasible.

Although the trend is towards "classless" special education, it does not mean that special classes and schools become redundant. Auxiliary schools and observation classes still have a role to play.

It is necessary to establish new special schools and classes either by the state or by municipality cooperation for the instruction and rehabilitation of some minority groups (severely handicapped child invalids, aurally and visually handicapped). They will, however, be located so that the pupils can, as far as possible, be transported daily to school even from great distances.

When the special education services are increased, it will be possible to "tailor" the remedial measures better to pupils' difficulties.

If the special education of a pupil is arranged in regular class, it always has to be ascertained that from the point of view of the pupil's overall rehabilitation this is a better alternative than special class, placement and that adequate and sufficient remedial measures are available for pupils.

The question "Special school, special class or clinic?" can probably be answered so that the special education of children with various handicaps requires a large set of alternatives. There is a need for clinic instruction, special class and special school instruction and also for other support measures. Special education takes place in close cooperation with regular instruction, and helping pupils with difficulties is planned individually in accordance with the nature of particular difficulties.

PROVISION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION OF EXCEPTIONAL SMALL GROUPS

Elias Niskanen and Unto Sikiö

A planning commission for special education has estimated the number of CP-children and children with sensory handicaps in need of special education. The commission arrived at the following estimate:

CP-children c. 1.000 pupils (1.5 per 1000)
Aurally handicapped c. 1.000 pupils (1.5 per 1000)
Visually handicapped c. 500 pupils (0.8 per 1000)

The commission is of the opinion that the establishment of a special class for CP-children and aurally handicapped children presupposes a population base of c. 100.000 and for the visually handicapped c. 200.000.

1. Education of aurally handicapped

Traditionally the state has provided instruction for the aurally handicapped. There are three Finnish-language (earlier 5) and one Swedish-language boarding schools. In 1972 An Act and Statute on municipal schools for aurally handicapped was given. According to the regulations the municipality may with the permission of the Ministry of Education set up a municipal school for aurally handicapped. The school may, however, be established only if the pupil base is permanently 15 and if pupil transportation is adequately arranged. In addition, the municipality is obliged to receive pupils from other municipalities designated by the Ministry of Education. These municipalities form the catchment area of the school. If the home of an aurally handicapped child is situated within this area, he is entitled to attend the municipal school for aurally handicapped, otherwise his education is arranged at a state boarding school or in a regular class using various supportive measures. Municipal schools for aurally handicapped cannot be boarding schools, but pupils are transported to and from school daily. The municipalities get state aid, which covers 95 per cent of running costs and 90 per cent of teacher salaries.

In the school year 1973-74 there were 5 and in 1974-75 already 10 municipal schools founded in accordance with the new act. Simultaneously 2 state boarding schools have been discontinued. There are plans to establish 3 more municipal schools: in the area near the capital, in south-eastern part, and eastern part of the country. When these plans are realized in the near future, the school organization for aurally handicapped pupils will be largely completed.

In the school year 1974-75 the recruitment areas of municipal schools for aurally handicapped children covered c. 40 per cent of the entire population of the country and the planned schools will bring up the coverage to c. 60 per cent. Aurally handicapped, who also have other handicaps and who need special rehabilitation, may also be transferred to a state boarding school even from a municipal school's recruitment area. In consideration of this, the responsibility for arranging the education of aurally handicapped will probably be divided equally between the state and the municipal schools.

A total of 585 pupils received instruction at state schools, municipal schools and municipal special classes for aurally handicapped in the school year 1974-75. Some aurally handicapped children have also studied in regular classes with the aid of special supporting measures.

2. The education of CP-children

The education of CP-children started fairly late in Finland. The first municipal CP-classes were found as late as the middle of 1950's. In the spring term 1974 there were CP-classes in 15 municipalities with a total of 303 pupils. In addition, there are two private boarding school type special schools for child invalids, which teach both CP-children and physically handicapped children. The two schools have provided special instruction annually to 275 pupils. Thus in the spring of 1974 there were c. 580 children in special education in classes for neurally and physically handicapped children. To this figure should be added those CP-children, who studied in other special classes or went to a normal school. Part of seriously handicapped CP-children are, however, obliged to be satisfied with home

education and they are exempted from compulsory education.

Several CP-children need besides instruction a lot of other rehabilitations since their instruction in sparsely populated areas has been difficult to arrange, the Ministry for Health and Social Affairs set up a committee towards the end of 1973 of the instruction and rehabilitation of severaly handicapped child invalids.

The committee proposed in its report that the private special schools for child invalids should be taken over by the state and that by 1980 six new special school centres should be founded. The schools would be founded and maintained on the basis of the Invalid Act. In addition to instruction the schools would provide adjustment training, rehabilitation and boarding. Instruction would be provided by educational authorities, rehabilitation by medical authorities and administration by social welfare authorities. The first special school centre for child invalids will be built in the town of Kuopio and it will probably be opened at the beginning of the school year 1976-77.

Those CP-children who are capable of attending regular classes or who can manage in municipal special classes would use the services of special school centres only temporarily. For this reason, more municipal CP-classes should be established and municipal cooperation should be improved so that the municipalities surrounding the CP-class municipality could utilize the services of the CP-class. The present educational legislation makes it possible to form joint special school districts for neurally handicapped children among several municipalities.

3. The education of visually handicapped

At present there is one state-maintained Finnish-language special school for visually handicapped in the town of Jyväskylä with c. 100 pupils. There is one Swedish-language school for the blind in Helsinki with 10 pupils. Besides there is in Helsinki a special class for the partially sighted and one municipal class for the blind.

There are no plans to found new special schools or classes for visually handicapped pupils. It is intended that their education

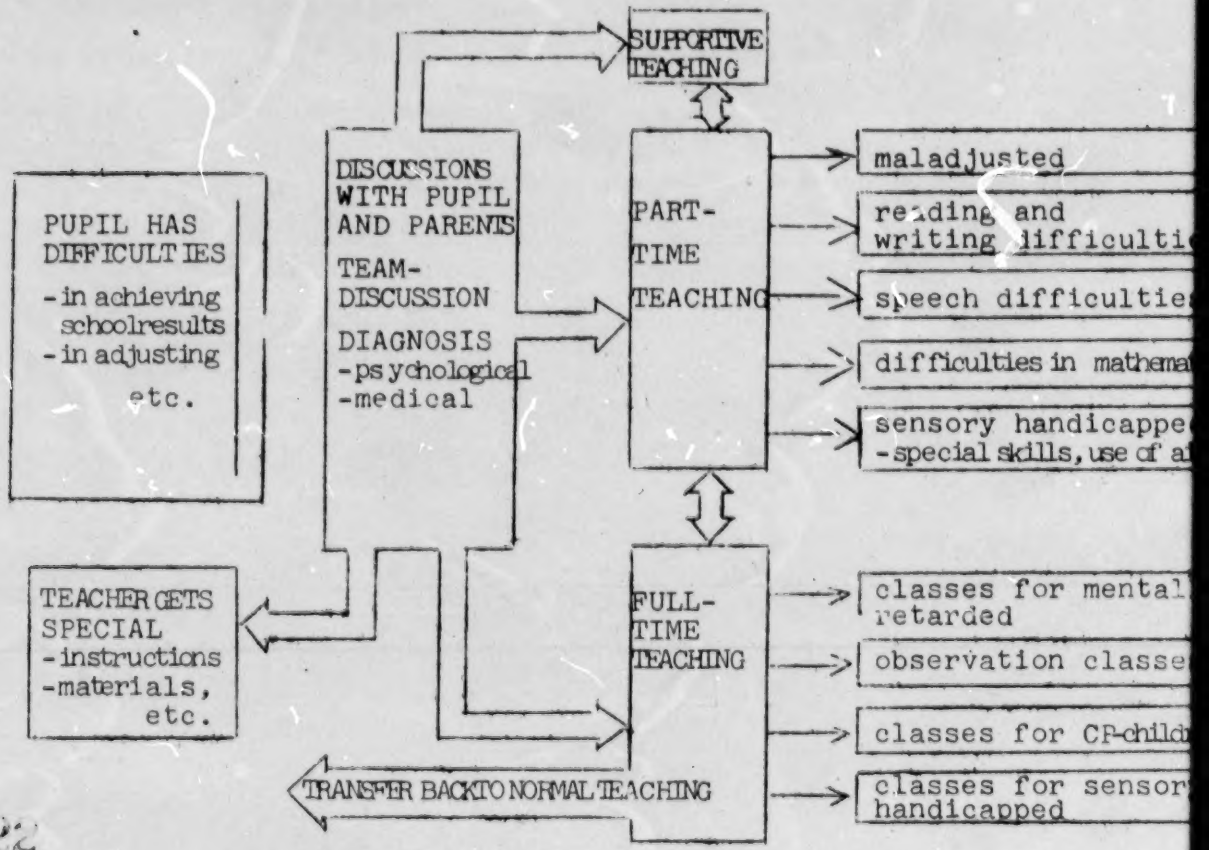
should more commonly than before take place in regular classes.

Those teachers who have a visually handicapped child in their class are given special guidance in short courses. Such courses have been arranged at the Jyväskylä school on the initiative of the National Board of Education. In order to make it possible for visually handicapped children to cope in normal schools and classes, the National Board of Education has proposed that the regulations concerning remedial instruction in the comprehensive school should be changed so that visually handicapped childeren would get 2 weekly hours extra remedial instruction. This would be subject to approval by the National Board of Education. A similar arrangement would apply to severely aurally handicapped and severely physically handicapped pupils.

The studies of those visually handicapped pupils who are in regular classes are supported by the Jyväskylä special school in the form of the afore-mentioned courses and arranging teacher and pupil quidance by visiting teachers. The production and distribution of teaching materials is also arranged in Jyväskylä.

APPENDIX 1

S P E C I A L E D U C A T I O N I N C O M P R E H E N
S C H O O L I N F I N L A N D



IX 1

S P E C I A L E D U C A T I O N I N C O M P R E H E N S I V E S C H O O L I N F I N L A N D